

Encyclopedia of Dreams in Islam and Modern Science

Introduction:

Dreams are one of the most fascinating phenomena in human life. In Islam, dreams are considered a part of faith and can contain messages, guidance, or reflections of one's state of mind. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: 'A good dream that comes true is one of forty-six parts of Prophethood.' (Bukhari 6472). Modern science studies dreams as a function of the brain during sleep, revealing how they help process emotions and memory. Both Islamic teachings and scientific findings show that dreams have deep meaning and purpose.

Dreams in the Qur'an:

The Qur'an mentions several important dreams that had divine significance. Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) عليه السلام saw a dream in which eleven stars, the sun, and the moon bowed to him — a vision that later came true. (Surah Yusuf 12:4). Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) عليه السلام also saw in a dream that he was sacrificing his son Ismail, which was a test from Allah. (Surah As-Saffat 37:102). These examples show that dreams can be a means of divine communication and guidance.

Types of Dreams in Islam:

According to Hadith, there are three types of dreams: 1. Good dreams (Ru'ya Saliha): These are from Allah and bring comfort or glad tidings. 2. Bad dreams (Hulm): These are from Shaytan (Satan) and cause fear or sadness. 3. Dreams from the mind (Nafs): These come from a person's own thoughts, emotions, or experiences. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'A good dream is from Allah, and a bad dream is from Shaytan.' (Bukhari 6986).

Interpretation of Dreams in Islam:

Dream interpretation (Tafsir al-Ahlam) has a long history in Islam. Scholars like Ibn Sirin (728 AD) wrote famous works explaining how symbols in dreams can reflect spiritual or moral states. Dreams are not judged by their surface meaning but by their context, timing, and the dreamer's condition. However, Islam warns against making false interpretations, as only Allah knows the unseen.

Etiquette Related to Dreams:

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught proper manners regarding dreams: If you see a good dream, thank Allah and share it only with loved ones. If you see a bad dream, seek refuge in Allah and do not share it. Spit lightly to the left three times and turn to the other side. (Muslim 2261). This practice prevents fear and protects one from negative influence.

Dreams of the Prophets:

The dreams of Prophets were a form of revelation (Wahy). For example, the dream of Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام led to the tradition of sacrifice during Eid al-Adha. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also received early revelations through true dreams before the Qur'an

was revealed. (Bukhari 3). These dreams were always truthful and full of divine wisdom.

Scientific Explanation of Dreams:

Modern science explains dreams as mental activities that occur during the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) stage of sleep. The brain processes daily experiences, emotions, and memories, combining them into symbolic images. Neuroscientists believe that dreams help with emotional balance, problem-solving, and creativity. This scientific understanding aligns with Islam's view that dreams reflect inner states and can carry meaning.

Stages of Sleep and Dreaming:

Science divides sleep into stages — light sleep, deep sleep, and REM sleep. Dreams mainly occur during REM sleep when brain activity increases. During this stage, the subconscious mind becomes active while the body rests. This allows the brain to organize thoughts and store memories. Islamic scholars also viewed dreams as reflections of the soul's journey during sleep.

Psychological Perspective on Dreams:

Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung viewed dreams as windows to the subconscious mind. Freud believed they express hidden desires, while Jung saw them as symbols of personal growth. Islam, however, sees dreams not only as psychological reflections but also as spiritual messages that can strengthen faith and guide behavior.

Difference Between Islamic and Scientific Views:

Islam teaches that dreams can have divine origin, while science sees them as natural mental processes. However, both agree that dreams reveal emotional and mental conditions. Islam emphasizes the spiritual dimension — some dreams may carry messages from Allah or warnings to believers. Science emphasizes the neurological process, showing how dreams aid in emotional healing and memory consolidation.

Scientific Benefits of Dreaming:

Modern research highlights several benefits of dreaming: • Helps process emotions and reduce stress. • Enhances creativity and problem-solving abilities. • Strengthens memory and learning. • Improves emotional regulation and psychological balance. Thus, dreaming is essential for mental and emotional health.

Dreams and Mental Health:

Healthy dreaming reflects emotional stability, while nightmares may indicate stress or anxiety. Islam teaches believers to sleep peacefully after performing Wudu and reciting Qur'anic verses. This helps reduce fear and promotes relaxation. Modern sleep science supports these habits, as positive mental states improve sleep quality and reduce bad dreams.

Prophetic Teachings on Sleeping and Dreams:

The Prophet ﷺ advised reciting Ayat al-Kursi (2:255), Surah Al-Ikhlās, Al-Falaq, and An-Naas before sleeping. He also encouraged sleeping on the right side and saying prayers for protection. These actions calm the mind and heart, ensuring restful sleep and pleasant dreams.

Dreams and Future Guidance:

In Islamic tradition, good dreams can offer insight, guidance, or comfort. However, believers are warned not to base major life decisions solely on dreams. They must be interpreted carefully in light of Islamic teachings and by knowledgeable scholars. Dreams are a mercy from Allah, reminding people of His presence and wisdom.

Summary:

Dreams in Islam are a spiritual phenomenon that connect the human soul to the unseen world. They can be messages from Allah, reflections of emotions, or simply mental images. Modern science studies dreams as brain functions that promote healing and creativity. Both perspectives agree that dreams hold deep meaning for human well-being. Following Islamic teachings about sleep and dream etiquette ensures peace of mind, spiritual growth, and a closer connection to Allah.